



Organic Explorer New Zealand

Discover

Best Places to Stay
Adventure, Ecotourism
Organic Wine & Artisan Food

4th Edition



Aro-Ha Adventure

SO I'm lying in bed reading Eckhart Tolle's book, *A New Earth*. It has been thoughtfully placed in my room by the staff of Aro-Ha Retreat, evidently some light reading to facilitate mindfulness practise.

The first chapter reads something along the lines of: whatever your circumstances in life are right now, you have created the place you find yourself in. I glance around my simple luxurious room, languidly stretch out

in my comfy king-sized bed (no husband or cat to squeeze around) and I think to myself; right on babe. You're doing just fine.

I am on evening one, of a 7 day wellness adventure at Aro Ha Retreat located 45 minutes from Queenstown. The retreat aims to facilitate life changing and body morphing practices. I have high expectations.

Aro Ha opened in January this year and is the creation of Chris Madison and Damian Chaparro, two Americans who met at the celebrity

favoured Ashram Retreat in California and decided to invest \$30 million and build their own health retreat somewhere in the world. They chose Glenorchy, New Zealand. It is a spectacular location.

The retreat is built to exacting environmental standards. There is some fancy German technology involving hydro and solar power and a panel in my bedroom tells me the power usage in my room as well as the facility as a whole. It will be interesting to see how the newly planted permaculture gardens fare



over the harsh Southland winter. But you know, that is what I find so exciting about the place. It's a work in progress and we the participants are all part of the process.

There is some doubt expressed that the feijoa's might not make it, but the committed and talented staff have made remarkable progress with the gardens in the short space of time the facility has been opened.

A typical day at Aro Ha involves getting up at 6.30am for vinyassa flow yoga at 7am, followed by breakfast, then a 10-17km hike on one of the surrounding DOC sub-alpine walks. Lunch then therapeutic massages, strength training, cooking classes, permaculture, time in the infra-red or Finnish saunas and outdoor hot and cold

pools. Evening restorative yoga, followed by meditation, dinner, movies, group sessions and more spa time if you want it.

The two highlights of my time here are the food and the staff.

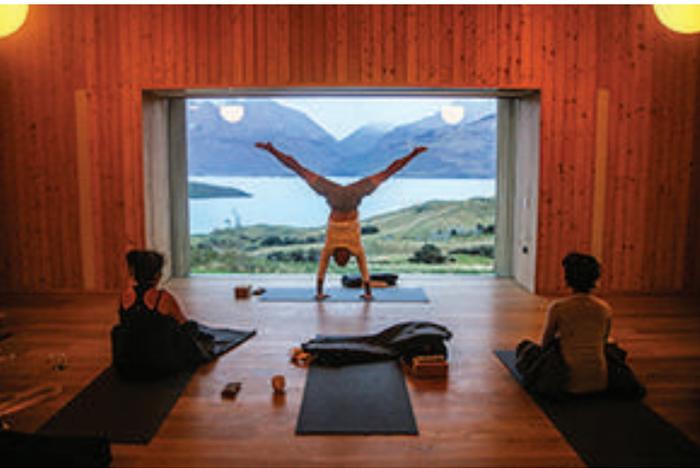
The staff are fantastic. Besides all being young, buff and gorgeous, with shining eyes and a healthy glow, they have multi-talents. Sam (the handstand yogi in the picture) is an artist, (see his work on www.samuelallison.com) he also leads us on the hikes, takes the guided journal writing workshops and has a calm, thoughtful way of engaging with each of us.

The food equally is a stand out. Beautifully presented, it is based on a vegan paleo diet (apparently only 1200 calo-

ries a day). You can actually taste the love (and nutrition) in each mouthful caringly prepared by chefs Debbie and Rani.

Groups are small. Ours was a group of 10. There are 22 staff to look after us. The property can sleep 32, but the intention is to keep groups to around 12 guests, 16 at a maximum. Aro Ha provides all the details, water bottles for each guest, wet weather gear is available in the dry room, jandals for the sauna and spa areas, and a particularly efficient laundry service for your hiking clothes. All you need to do is turn up and leave yourself in their capable hands.

Skip to the end, my husband now laughs he's glad I didn't go on a religious retreat as I have come back with such



zeal, he and my daughter are taking bets on how long the health binge is going to stick. Josephine is hoping it wont see out the month. They want to relax back into their comfort zone of potato chip snacks and chocolate. (They are not that unhealthy, but you know what I mean, our habits generally could do with improvement.)

But I tell you what. We are not going back.

I have skirted around the periphery of organics, permaculture, earth & straw bale

building, yoga, meditation and exercise for many years, but this is the first time I have put them all together as a practice at the same time.

The results:
I have lost 4 kilos.
My asthma has abated.
I too have shiny eyes and a healthy glow.
I love my husband and daughter more than ever.
I am really happy.
Nothing else to say, except...

I wish everyone could experience the Aro Ha effect.

Where

Aro Ha Retreat,
Glenorchy, South Island,
New Zealand, 45 minutes
drive from Queenstown.

Getting there

Air NZ flies non-stop
direct to Queenstown
from Sydney, Melbourne
and Brisbane. Daily con-
nections are available via
Auckland, Rotorua and
Christchurch.
See www.airnz.co.nz

How Much

Aro Ha offers a seven
day, six-night Delve Deep
Retreat from \$NZ6250.00
a person and a four
night, five day Invigorate
and Enrich Retreat from
\$NZ4550.00 a person.
www.Aro-Ha.com

